

Dear Ms. Childs:

1

I want to register my opposition to the preferred alternative for amending the oil and gas leasing plan for the northeastern planning area of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, preserving current levels of protection, presents a better choice for the BLM. If any change is to be made, it should be reinforcing current protections, especially for the critical and sensitive Teshekpuk Lake area.

002  
Birds

The Interior Department's own data speak to the importance of protecting the wetlands at issue. Between 1999 and 2003, 47 percent of brant and 44 percent of white-fronted geese on average molted on lakes that would be exposed to drilling by the preferred alternative. The extant literature shows that geese are highly sensitive to disturbance during molt. The preferred alternative presents an unacceptable risk.

003  
Caribou

Furthermore, the 45,000-member Teshekpuk Lake Caribou herd would lose 75 percent of its current protection if the BLM adopts the preferred alternative. These animals constitute an indispensable cultural resource to the Inupiat Eskimo people, and a treasured asset to all Americans. The Teshekpuk Lake area calving grounds would be negatively impacted by adoption of the preferred alternative.

4

True wilderness dwindles at an alarming rate across the globe. The present is the time to halt attrition, not to disintegrate the largest unprotected tract of public land in the United States. This is especially true of ecologically-important wetlands in a time when no net loss, or net gain, of wetland acreage has been touted as a political goal for Republican administrations.

5

The contemporary industrial paradigm based on fossil fuel consumption must inevitably change. Though nearsighted proposals for exploration in irreplaceable wilderness might temporarily slow this evolution, the cost is too great to justify the gains.

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I urge you to adopt Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, and to work towards developing a plan that increases protection for the Teshekpuk Lake region in the future.

Thank you,

Sean O'Connor

I strongly oppose your preferred alternative for amending the oil and gas leasing plan for the northeastern planning area of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). I urge you to select Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, and to prepare a new plan that will strengthen the existing environmental and wildlife protection in the area, especially in the critical and fragile Teshekpuk Lake region.

The risk to wildlife is simply too great, the consequences too likely to be irreversible. The Interior Department's own data, gathered between 1999 and 2003 indicate that on average, 47 percent of the brant and 44 percent of the white-fronted geese now molt on lakes that would be partly or wholly unprotected in your preferred alternative.

Further, the preferred alternative would diminish protection for the caribou by fully 75 percent. Neither of these risks is acceptable and neither is necessary. The Inupiat Eskimo people rely on the 45,000-member herd for subsistence and have done so for 8000 years.

The entire Teshekpuk Lake Surface Protection Area deserves your most careful protection. Yet, your preferred alternative would reduce protection to a scant 213,000 acres, less than five percent of the planning area. That level of protection will not begin to protect the geese, the

caribou or the dozens of other species that now find safety there. Available science clearly indicates that geese are highly sensitive to disturbance during the molt. And it shows that caribou that give birth to their young in this area are also at risk from the kind of disturbance your preferred alternative would permit.

At the same time, there is no science to show that these areas, closed under the existing leasing plan, can be safely opened. Your proposal would jeopardize a globally significant ecological resource.

Please choose Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, in this plan.

Sincerely,  
(Your name and address)